

Letter to the Editor

In 1995, while one of a handful of Black students at the National War College (NWC) at Fort Lesley J. McNair in Washington, DC, I requested to attend the Million Man March, which was being held in Washington on Friday, October 16, 1995. As a young man from Louisville, Kentucky, who came to the Marine Corps via Annapolis, I had wanted to attend this historical event and to join my brother, Rodney K. Dunn, who was traveling in from Columbus, Ohio. The Million Man March has proved to be a historical, iconic event for our entire country.

NWC had a scheduled field trip to the Gettysburg Battlefield for that day. I had visited there four times prior to this trip and had taught the battle sequence while an instructor at the Marine Corps' Amphibious Warfare School (now the Expeditionary Warfare School) from 1984 to 1986. My request was turned down. I recall traveling on the bus going north that Friday morning and the cascade of buses coming south, heading to the National Mall. The contrasts of that Friday morning have stayed with me over the years.

Clearly, professional military education (PME) core instruction and teaching do not appear to have kept pace with racial diversity within the Services. In 1995, it was not even a consideration to allow me to attend that march. A reason may have been because the NWC faculty was not a diverse faculty and had no appreciation for the Million Man March, so my request did not stand a chance.

Fast-forward to 2020. Most PME institutions are taught by majority white faculty members still, with some staffed completely by white men and women. Without a diverse faculty, course content will reflect the same lack of diversity. But now the Services have the window of opportunity to change this woeful situation.

The impact of PME cannot be overstated. All future generals, admirals, and many Senior Executive Service members attend these prestigious institutions. I attended NWC, then after graduation taught across the campus at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces (ICAF), now the Eisenhower School. In effect, I had the best of both: national security strategy at NWC and national resources strategy at ICAF. Both were serious academic powerhouses, with one distinct difference outside of their mission statements: NWC was taught by an all-white, mostly male faculty, while ICAF was taught by a racially diverse faculty with women filling significant faculty positions. ICAF had a solid emphasis on ensuring that the rich history of our military's diversity was taught to all students. I was a member of that prestigious faculty for 2 years.

This past year, one of the more significant initiatives that former Secretary of the Navy, Thomas Modly, had introduced was his "Vector" series of changes. Vector 13 was a wholesale change in PME taught by the Navy and Marine Corps. Secretary Modly called for the implementation of a Naval Community College and other initiatives that would require hiring more faculty, teaching, and administrative positions. I saw this as an opportunity to finally change PME by hiring diverse faculty members and enhancing curricula throughout these schoolhouses to reflect the rich cultural history of our Services and organizations. His resignation may have stalled this initiative. I hope not.

Ensuring all our military students are taught subjects that include an acknowledgment of the rich diversity that exists in our military and the cultures of foreign militaries means that we are operating in a more realistic world.

It is time for a thorough review of our PME taught by all the Services with the thought of improving the academic and practical approaches to winning the next battle. I recommend that NWC and all war colleges be required to take a time out to consider what is happening *now* and be compelled to write a way ahead that will improve race relations in our Services and society. Unless they do, the foundation of our national security will erode precipitously.

I was a student 25 years ago. PME has not kept abreast with the national security imperative to eliminate the toxicity of institutional bias and discrimination. JFQ

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The Million Man March, October 16, 1995, in Washington, DC (Mark Reinstein)